

The Americans who assume great risk overseas understand the great cause they are in. Not long ago, I received a letter from a captain in the 3d Infantry Division in Baghdad. He wrote about his pride in serving a just cause and about the deep desire of Iraqis for liberty. "I see it," he said, "in the eyes of a hungry people every day here. They are starved for freedom and opportunity." And he concluded, "I just thought you'd like a note from the frontlines of freedom." That Army captain and all of our men and women serving in the war on terror are on the frontlines of freedom. And I want each of them to know, your country thanks you, and your country supports you.

Fellow citizens, we've been tested these past 24 months, and the dangers have not

passed. Yet Americans are responding with courage and confidence. We accept the duties of our generation. We are active and resolute in our own defense. We are serving in freedom's cause, and that is the cause of all mankind.

Thank you, and may God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:31 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim, a Muslim cleric killed in a terrorist bombing in Najaf, Iraq, on August 29. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## Remarks at Kirkpatrick Elementary School in Nashville, Tennessee *September 8, 2003*

Thank you all very much. I am honored to be at a school which refuses to leave any child behind. A good school begins with a good principal, somebody who is willing to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. And that's what Kim Fowler has done, and we're honored to be here. And I want to thank you for putting up with this huge entourage that travels with me. *[Laughter]*

We're here because, as you may remember, the Federal Government passed an innovative law recently, and a lot of people are wondering what that law means. And we have used this school as an example of what is possible for parents and for educators to make sure that not a single child gets left behind.

Before I begin to talk about the school, I do want to say that I am most appreciative that the superintendent of schools from Nashville public schools is with us today. He's an innovator. He believes in

setting high expectations for every child. It's not my first time I have been in Pedro Garcia's presence.

I love the motto of the school district here: Whatever It Takes—whatever it takes to succeed. And Pedro, thank you for setting a good example. We appreciate what you're doing, and we appreciate what the Nashville schools are doing to take advantage of the No Child Left Behind Act.

When I was looking for somebody to be the head of the Department of Education, I wanted somebody who had been on the frontlines of education, perhaps a superintendent of schools. And I knew a man in Houston, when I was the Governor of Texas, who was setting high standards and using innovation when innovation was needed to make sure the children of Houston, Texas, learned. And that man is with us today, who is now the head of the Department of Education, the Secretary of

Education, Rod Paige. And thank you for coming.

He's not the only person in this audience who has been the Secretary of Education. Senator Lamar Alexander was the Secretary of Education and did a fine job. I'm so honored you're here, Senator. Thank you for coming.

And I'm honored also to have traveled down with Senator Bill Frist, the majority leader of the United States Senate. He's doing a fabulous job for the country. As well, we've got Congressman Zach Wamp and Congressman Lincoln Davis and Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn with us from the mighty Tennessee delegation. We're honored you all are here, and thank you for coming.

The mayor of Nashville, Tennessee, Bill Purcell, is here. And Mr. Mayor, thank you for coming. I'm honored you would take time out to greet us. It means a lot that you're here, and we appreciate you coming as well.

Finally, when I landed at the airport, I had the honor of meeting Brenda Wilson. The people of this good elementary school know who Brenda is; people around the city may not. She's a soldier in the army of compassion. She's a person who volunteers to make sure the children can learn. She represents the thousands of people in this city and in this State who say, "If I've got a problem with a public school, I'm going to be involved with it. Instead of hoping that some distant government insists upon excellence, I, Brenda Wilson, will dedicate myself by donating time to make sure children get the very best."

She volunteered from 1995 to 2002 in this school. She did such a good job that you've named her the coordinator of volunteer services. That means if a child is going hungry, somebody will help find the food. If a child needs clothing, somebody will help find the clothes. If a child needs extra tutorial help beyond that which I'm going to describe, Brenda's job is to find people to volunteer, and she herself volunteers.

You know, there's a lot of talk in our—across our country about how strong America is. And we're strong, and I intend to keep us that way. But the true strength is not our military strength or our military muscle. The true strength is the heart and soul of the American people, people who are willing to say, "How can I help somebody? What can I do to make my community a better place?" Brenda, thank you for being one of those soldiers in the army of compassion. I appreciate you being here. Thank you, Brenda.

So there's been a lot of talk about the No Child Left Behind Act. Let me describe the principles inherent in the act, what we're doing to make sure no child gets left behind, and why I'm here at this elementary school.

First, as I mentioned, this society of ours must challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. I believe, Kim believes, I know the teachers at this good school believe that every child can learn. We believe in the potential of every single child and, therefore, must insist that every child learns. See, if you don't believe certain children can't learn, then the tendency is just to shuffle them through the system. If you don't believe every child has worth, then the system tends just to give up on the child and move them through. And then at the end of high school, people can't read, and we've created a social problem.

So the No Child Left Behind Act says that we're going to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. And I want to thank Kim for doing that, and I want to thank the teachers in this school and across this city who are willing to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. Teaching is a noble profession; it's an honorable profession. And we want to thank our teachers, not only at this school but across this city and this State for agreeing to teach.

So, in other words, the bill basically says, "We believe in high expectations, and we believe it so strongly, we want to measure to see if those expectations are being met."

It's one thing to say, "I believe in high expectations," but unless you measure, you don't know whether expectations are being achieved.

And so, for the first time, the Federal Government has said, "In return for Federal dollars, we're going to measure"—not we, the Federal Government, but the State and local authorities will measure. In return for the Federal Government writing checks to States and to children, we want to know.

The person who doesn't believe certain children can learn just don't—doesn't care about the measurement system. If you do care about each child, then you want to know whether or not expectations are being met.

There's a lot of talk—listen, I cut my teeth in accountability in the State of Texas. I've heard every excuse in the book why not to measure. "Oh, you're teaching to test," you'll hear. Well, if you're teaching a child to read, that child will pass the test. "We're testing too much." My attitude is, is that in order to know, in order to diagnose a problem, you have to measure it in the first place. You cannot solve a problem until you measure in the first place.

And so the Congress did the right thing in insisting that we hold people accountable for results, and now we measure. And for the schools that are doing great, there ought to be nothing but praise. And for the schools that need help in meeting high expectations, there needs to be extra resources. And that's what this bill did. The budget for next year boosts funding for elementary and secondary education to \$53.1 billion. That's a 26-percent increase since I took office. In other words, we understand that resources need to flow to help solve the problem.

Of that money, a lot of it goes to Title I—Title I money to help certain children. That's to the tune of \$12.3 billion. That's a 41-percent increase for Title I students. And that's where the money goes, to help

the Title I students in this school on special needs.

Now, the other thing we've done, which I'm proud of, is to fund effective reading programs. If you can't read, you're not going to do math. And if you can't read, you can't be a scientist. If you can't read, you can't understand history. If you can't read, you're going nowhere, if the truth be known. And so we've spent money for reading programs, money that will fund curriculum that actually works. There's a science with reading; it's not an art. They know what it takes to teach a child how to read. I appreciate the fact that the Nashville school system and this school uses reading programs that will teach a child how to read, not that sound good or feel good but actually achieve the results necessary so no child is left behind.

And so, the resources were there for—not only to make sure that teacher training is available and methodologies that work. I know we've had a lot of teacher training programs all around the country. It's beginning to make a significant effect. We started with the early grades first. We've got money in place to fund the measurement systems, to make sure the measurement systems get up and running and operate well. And we've got money in place to help students that need extra work.

And that's why we're here, because there is a triggering event in the bill, and it says that if schools are not meeting expectations, then parents should be given different options. If students—if the school is not achieving that which is expected and there's a chance a child will be left behind, then one remedy is to give parents the choice to choose another public school or perhaps to send their—a child to a tutorial sessions like we just saw today.

We have come from a really interesting little laboratory of excellence that Kim set up where three different providers were tutoring children. It gave me a chance to see that this school and this school district has not only reached out to parents but

has reached out to educational providers that say, "We want to enlist your services to make sure no child is left behind." We measure. We determine which children need help. Parents are then given the option to decide what kind of tutors is needed to meet that child's needs.

The school district and the school don't fear extra help. They welcome extra help. They have used the measuring system not to punish anybody but determine what else is needed to make sure the child gets extra help. We not only saw the children learning and practicing to read; we met their parents. They could provide the testimony a lot more eloquently than me. But when you hear a parent—a mom say to me, "My child was at a second-grade level; the measurement system saw that she needed help. Thankfully, the Federal Government passed a law which provides extra time on tasks for my child, and now she's reading at the fifth-grade level, and she's in the fourth grade," that's a good sign. It means this particular child will not be left behind. It means the system is working. We measure to determine who needs help, and we provide the help.

And so, one of the problems we face—obviously, not here, but one of the problems we face is whether or not other school districts are properly advertising that which is available for students that need help. We've come to Nashville because the superintendent of schools has decided to make it widely known that extra services for children are available; made it widely known that summer school, after-school programs, Saturday programs, tutorials provided by the school district and/or private enterprise, are all available for parents whose children qualify.

You see, if you measure and then don't provide extra help, the measurement system is empty. If you measure, determine who needs help, and then provide the extra help, we have done our duty as adults to provide the skills necessary for children to succeed in life. And that's what this school

is doing. The tutorials have got to make sure that the programs have got proven track records, that they relate to directly what is needed to meet the curriculum needs of a school.

One other thing that's interesting that we have discovered is that research shows that after-school tutoring programs can do a lot for student achievement. That makes sense. If you focus on a child, focus energies on an individual child and stay on it and stay on task and if you believe every child can learn, then we will succeed.

And so, what I want people to understand around the country is that leaders, education leaders and Governors must advertise to the parents that which is now available under the No Child Left Behind Act, just like they're doing here in Nashville, Tennessee.

Kim was telling me they sent out flyers to parents in her—the parents of the children who go to her school. They're aggressive in the outreach to make sure parents know that which is available. And that's what other States must now do; other States must seize the moment. Other States must not fear measurement but use the measuring tool as a way to determine who needs help. And the resources are there to provide that help. Other States must challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. Other States must do their duty to their children.

Kim Fowler is—has got the right attitude. She is not intimidated by measurement. She's not afraid to be held to account. She looks at the tests as a way to help people. She knows that you don't teach self-esteem—there's not a course that says the self-esteem—you teach a child to read, and he or she earns self-esteem. And that's the right attitude.

I'm so thankful that we've got people like Kim all across America who have got the right attitude. And I'm so thankful that we've got teachers like the teachers here that work with Kim, to make sure that no child is left behind.

Lakeisha Begley is a fourth-grader here. She was way below grade level. The system kicked in. Barbara, her mama, said that, one, she was appreciative of the fact that she had a choice. See, she was notified—said, “Your daughter’s not doing well”—and then was given an option, a range of options. The school and the district trust the parents to make the right choice. It’s not one of these paternalistic things that, “This is what’s going to happen.” They say, “We’ve got a problem with your child. We’re going to give you some options from which to choose.” So she signed up for a private tutor.

Barbara said she’s already seen the difference. The child is excited. The child can’t wait to read. “From day one, Lakeisha learned better study skills,” she said. She was thrilled about doing it and thrilled about learning. The program motivated her to learn more. And that’s what we’re here to talk about, how to make sure we can put programs in place that motivate our children who need help to learn more.

I’m excited to be here. I’m excited to be here because I believe that this country

can solve any problem that we face. We face a problem, to make sure every child can read. The statistics are loud and clear, too many of our fourth-graders cannot read at grade level. The Federal Government decided to do its part by not only providing the resources but by insisting upon results.

We are challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We believe every child can learn. And I’m convinced when these programs are fully implemented, children will learn, and America will be better off.

Thank you for having me here today. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:40 p.m. in the auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Kim Fowler, principal, Kirkpatrick Elementary School; Pedro E. Garcia, director of schools, Metropolitan Nashville Davidson County Board of Public Education; and Kirkpatrick student Lakeisha Begley, and her grandmother, Barbara Stegall. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

## Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Nashville *September 8, 2003*

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Lamar puts it a little less delicately: “Without Tennessee, there would be no Texas.” [*Laughter*] Without Tennessee, there would be no President George W. Bush.

I want to thank you all for coming tonight. I really appreciate your support and your friendship and your prayers. Tonight is the beginning of what is going to be a successful campaign here. We’re laying the groundwork not only for a victory here in Tennessee, but we’re laying the groundwork for what is going to be a victory in November of 2004.

I appreciate your contributions, but I will remind you there are other contributions to make. Going to need you to put your signs in the yard, need you to put out the mailers. When you go to the coffee shop, make sure you talk it up. [*Laughter*] And remind them that this administration has a vision which is positive and hopeful and optimistic for every single American.

The political season will come in its own time. I’m loosening up. [*Laughter*] And I’m getting ready. But I’ve got a job to do, and right now I’m focused on the people’s business. We will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of every American